

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 150624Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8189

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TAIPEI 0330

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TW

SUBJECT: PRELUDE TO THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON (PART I):

INDICATIONS OF A TOUGHENING GROC STANCE TOWARDS
POLITICAL DISSIDENTS AND ANTI-SOCIAL ELEMENTS

REF: 75 TAIPEI 8249 (NOTAL), 75 TAIPEI 8213 (NOTAL),
TAIPEI 0133 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IN THE PAST MONTH THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT THE GROC HAS ADOPTED, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, A TOUGHER STANCE TOWARD POLITICAL DISSIDENTS AND OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIETY. SUCH A STANCE, IF IT PROVES TO BE MORE THAN TRANSITORY, WOULD APPEAR TO BE PRIMARILY A REFLECTION OF INCREASING GROC EMPHASIS ON INTERNAL SECURITY, STABILITY, AND UNITY DURING A PROLONGED PERIOD OF CONTINUING ECONOMIC
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AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY BUT COULD ALSO REFLECT MORE IMMEDI-

ATE CONCERNS THAT DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES, WHICH BECAME MORE PREVALENT DURING THE RECENT CAMPAIGN PERIOD FOR LEGISLATIVE YUAN ELECTIONS, NOT BE PERMITTED TO BECOME "EXCESSIVE." IF THIS TOUGHER STANCE CONTINUES, THE GROC MAY TAKE FURTHER ACTIONS TO DISCOURAGE OR RESTRICT EXPRESSION OF OPINIONS OPPOSING GOVERNMENT POLICIES. HOWEVER, FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL, THE GROC IS LIKELY TO ACT CAUTIOUSLY, AVOIDING ANY PRECIPITOUS ACTION THAT MIGHT ALIENATE SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF THE POPULACE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS OF 1975 THE EMBASSY REPORTED SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT THE GROC WAS CONTINUING EFFORTS TO RELAX IN CERTAIN AREAS PREVIOUSLY TIGHT CONTROLS ON SOCIETY IN GENERAL AND POLITICS SPECIFICALLY. EXAMPLES OF THIS RELAXATION INCLUDE THE 1975 COMMUTATION ACT, THE GROC AGREEMENT TO ACCEPT SOME OF THE "SPECIAL AGENTS" RELEASED BY THE PRC, AND THE ISSUANCE OF A PUBLICATION LICENSE TO THE OPPOSITION-STAFFED TAIWAN POLITICAL REVIEW (TPR). A RELIABLE GROC SOURCE HAS ALSO INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT THE PREMIER ISSUED FIRM INSTRUCTIONS TO LOCAL ELECTION OFFICES THAT DURING THE DECEMBER 1975 LEGISLATIVE YUAN (LY) ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, NO CANDIDATE WAS TO BE DISQUALIFIED BECAUSE OF HIS ACTIONS OR SPEECHES. WHILE THIS DIRECTIVE MAY HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY A REFLECTION OF THE GROC'S DESIRE AT THE TIME TO AVOID CREATING CAMPAIGN ISSUES, IT MAY ALSO HAVE REFLECTED A WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW A FREER EXPRESSION OF VIEWS THAN PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE. THIS APPARENT WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE GROC TO ADOPT A SOMEWHAT MORE RELAXED ATTITUDE WAS NOTED (IF NOT FULLY APPRECIATED) BY OPPOSITIONISTS AND HAD BEEN CONSIDERED TO BE PART OF A CONTINUING EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE GROC AND THE PREMIER TO GARNER SUPPORT AMONG TAIWANESE, THE YOUNG, AND OTHER ELEMENTS IN SOCIETY.

3. HOWEVER, SINCE LATE DECEMBER (AND FOLLOWING THE LY ELECTIONS) THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT THE GROC IS AGAIN CLAMPING DOWN ON DISSIDENT POLITICAL ELEMENTS AND TIGHTENING UP IN OTHER AREAS. IN THE POLITICAL AREA, THE FIRST PUBLIC SIGNAL WAS THE PREMIER'S DECEMBER 25 (CONSTITUTION DAY) ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN'S CLUB (SEE 75 TAIPEI 8249). IN THIS ADDRESS THE PREMIER RESPONDED TO MANY OF THE POINTS

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RAISED BY OPPOSITIONISTS DURING THE LY CAMPAIGN, CRITICIZING THOSE WHO CALLED FOR A COMPLETE RE-ELECTION OF THE CENTRAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES, DENYING THAT THERE IS ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN TAIWANESE AND MAINLANDERS, AND NOTING THAT "NO ONE IS PERMITTED TO DESTROY THE CONSTITUTION." IN A JANUARY 6 SPEECH TO OFFICIALS OF THE TAIWAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, THE PREMIER AMPLIFIED THIS THEME BY WARNING THAT "FROM NOW ON WE MUST BE PARTICULARLY ON GUARD AGAINST CHINESE COMMUNIST DIVISIVE TACTICS

AND INFILTRATION AIMING AT UNDERCUTTING OUR INTERNAL UNITY."

4. SPECIFIC ACTIONS SUCH AS THE SUSPENSION OF TPR FOR ONE YEAR AND THE INTERPELLATION SUBMITTED BY 35 LEGISLATORS CALLING FOR FURTHER ACTION AGAINST THE STAFF OF THAT PUBLICATION (SEE 75 TAIPEI 8213 AND TAIPEI 0133) ALSO SUGGEST A TOUGHENING STANCE TOWARDS OPPOSITIONISTS. IN ADDITION, A RELIABLE GROC SOURCE HAS INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT THE PUBLIC PROCURATOR'S OFFICE IS CONSIDERING PROSECUTING INDEPENDENT LY CANDIDATE YEN MING-SHENG (7346/2494/5110) FOR A STATEMENT HE ALLEGEDLY MADE IN A CAMPAIGN RALLY THAT "IT WILL NOT MATTER IF THE COMMUNISTS COME HERE, FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE'S LIFE WILL NOT BE ANY DIFFERENT." IT IS ALSO RUMORED IN PRESS AND OPPOSITIONIST CIRCLES THAT PAI YA-TSAN (4101/7161/3605), WOULD-BE CANDIDATE FOR THE LY ELECTIONS WHO WAS ARRESTED JUST BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD BEGAN (75 TAIPEI 7250), HAS BEEN SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT. IN VIEW OF THE 1975 COMMUTATION ACT WHICH RESULTED IN REDUCTION OF SENTENCES OF AT LEAST SOME OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH WHAT APPEAR TO BE MORE SEVERE OFFENSES THAN PAI'S, A GROC DECISION TO SENTENCE PAI TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT, IF TRUE, WOULD APPEAR TO BE UNUSUALLY STIFF.

5. AN INDICATION THAT THE GROC MAY BE ADOPTING A HARDER LINE IN OTHER AREAS IS THE RADIO AND TELEVISION ACT, ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 26, 1975, STIPULATING THAT NEWS, GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS, EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMS SHOULD COMPRISE NO LESS THAN 45 PERCENT OF THE PROGRAM HOURS ON RADIO AND NO LESS THAN 50 PERCENT ON TELEVISION. THIS ACT WOULD INCREASE ALREADY EXISTING GOVERNMENT CONTROLS AND INFLUENCE OVER RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAMMING.

6. A STIFFER ATTITUDE IS ALSO REFLECTED IN NEW REGULATIONS AIMED AGAINST CRIMINALS. NEWSPAPERS HAVE CITED "SOUS CLOSE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO THE GOVERNMENT" AS SAYING THAT FROM NOW ON THE EXECUTIVE YUAN WILL DECIDE ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS WHETHER TO TRY PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENT CRIMES ALLEGEDLY THREATENING NATIONAL SECURITY IN MILITARY RATHER THAN CIVILIAN COURTS FOR HEAVIER PUNISHMENT AND FASTER VERDICTS TO PROTECT SOCIAL ORDER. PREVIOUSLY, THE DECISION TO TRY ROBBERS AND OTHER COMMON CRIMINALS UNDER MARTIAL LAW TENDED TO BE RESTRICTED TO CRIMES COMMITTED BY THREE OR MORE PEOPLE. UNDER THE NEW PROCEDURES, CASES OF INDIVIDUAL CRIMINALS COULD ALSO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE MILITARY COURT IF, IN THE EXECUTIVE YUAN'S VIEW, THEY AFFECT NATIONAL SECURITY. IN A SIMILAR VEIN AND REFLECTING THE INCREASING NUMBER OF CRIMES COMMITTED BY JUVENILES, THE LEGISLATIVE YUAN ON NOVEMBER 26 PASSED A MOTION CALLING FOR THE LOWERING OF THE AGE CEILING IN JUVENILE LAW FROM 18 TO 17.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TAIPEI 0330

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7. STRICTER TRAFFIC REGULATIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN INTRODUCED PERIODICALLY OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS IN ORDER TO BRING SOME ORDER TO THE PRESENTLY CHAOTIC STREET SITUATION IN MAJOR CITIES. HOWEVER, WHILE THERE ARE SOME VISIBLE SIGNS OF PROGRESS IN THIS AREA, SUCH REGULATIONS CONTINUE TO BE HONORED PRIMARILY IN THE BREACH.

8. IN ADDITION THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD THAT THE GROC IS TIGHTENING SECURITY AT MILITARY BASES WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF DECREASING THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN (I.E., AMERICAN) VISITORS. DAO HAS ALSO REPORTED SEPARATELY THAT ALL MAJOR MILITARY UNITS HAVE BEEN REDESIGNATED FOR SECURITY REASONS.

9. ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHETHER THE SPEECHES, ACTIONS, AND OTHER MEASURES DESCRIBED ABOVE ARE MORE THAN A TRANSITORY PHENOMENON, ALL OF THEM REFLECT INCREASED GROC
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EMPHASIS ON INTERNAL SECURITY AND STABILITY. WHILE THIS EMPHASIS HAS EXISTED THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE GROC'S RULE ON TAIWAN, THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE GROC HAS ENFORCED MEASURES TO PROMOTE SECURITY AND STABILITY HAS VARIED OVER THE YEARS.

10. DURING THE PAST YEAR -- A TIME WHEN THE GROC HAS SIMULTANEOUSLY FACED ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES -- THE EMBASSY HAS NOTED AN INCREASING EMPHASIS ON THEMES OF DOMESTIC UNITY AND STABILITY. MANY OF THE MEASURES MENTIONED ABOVE HAVE PROBABLY BEEN IN THE WORKS FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND MAY BE MERELY A REFLECTION OF THIS LONGER TERM EMPHASIS ON UNITY, STABILITY, AND SECURITY RATHER THAN A SHORT-TERM CONCERTED EFFORT TO CLAMP DOWN ON PROBLEM AREAS IN THE SOCIETY. AND THE NEAR COINCIDENCE OF THEIR EMERGENCE AT THIS TIME MAY WELL BE PRIMARILY ATTRIBUTABLE TO A DESIRE ON THE GROC'S PART TO DELAY INITIATING ACTIONS THAT COULD HAVE CREATED CAMPAIGN ISSUES DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD.

11. HOWEVER, THE PREMIER'S RECENT SPEECHES, THE SUSPENSION OF TPR, AND THE INTERPELLATION BY 35 LEGISLATORS HAVE ALL BEEN CITED BY INDEPENDENTS AND POLITICALLY SENSITIVE OBSERVERS AS EVIDENCE THAT THE GROC HAS IN FACT DECIDED TO ADOPT A TOUGHER STANCE TOWARDS OPPOSITIONISTS. ESTIMATES OF HOW TOUGH THIS STANCE WILL BE VARY: SOME OPPOSITIONISTS SUCH AS YEN MING-SHENG, KUO YU-HSIN (6753/7183/2450), AND TPR EDITOR CHANG CHUNG-HUNG (1728/0193/1347) HAVE EXPRESSED STRONG APPREHENSION THAT THE GROC MAY MOVE DIRECTLY AGAINST ONE OR ALL OF THEM; OTHERS, SUCH AS INDEPENDENT LEGISLATOR KANG NING-HSIANG (1660/1380/4382), HAVE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT GROC ACTION AGAINST OPPOSITIONISTS WILL BE LIMITED TO HARASSMENT, STOPPING SHORT OF ARREST.

12. A VARIETY OF REASONS HAVE BEEN PROFFERED TO EXPLAIN THE APPARENT TOUGHENING IN THE GROC'S STANCE, THE MOST COMMON OF WHICH IS THAT THE PREMIER HAS BOWED TO THE CONCERNS OF CONSERVATIVES IN THE KMT AND THE GOVERNMENT, WHO ARE ONE ELEMENT OF THE PREMIER'S POWER BASE.

13. IT HAS ALSO BEEN SUGGESTED BY SOME THAT IN THE MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, THE PREMIER WAS WILLING TO RELAX RESTRICTED

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TIONS ON EXPRESSION OF VIEWS IN ORDER TO MEASURE THE DEGREE TO WHICH HIS POLICY OF SEEKING TO ESTABLISH A SPIRIT OF UNITY

AMONG VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE POPULACE HAD SUCCEEDED. ACCORD-
ING TO THIS INTERPRETATION, ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN TPR, ELECTION
SPEECHES BY SOME NON-KMT LY CANDIDATES, AND THE SUPPORT THEY
GARNERED WERE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THE DESIRED LEVEL OF
UNITY HAD NOT BEEN ACHIEVED; AND AS A RESULT THE GROC HAS
DECIDED TO REASSERT PREVIOUS CONTROLS OVER OPPOSITIONISTS.

14. THE EMBASSY FINDS BOTH THE ABOVE THEORIES PLAUSIBLE BUT
HAS NO FACTS TO SUPPORT EITHER OF THEM. WHEREVER THE TRUTH
OF THE MATTER LIES (AND IT MAY WELL FALL SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN
THE TWO THEORIES PRESENTED ABOVE), THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT
THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE WILL NOT BE A REVERSION TO THE
MORE REPRESSIVE POLICIES OF THE PAST BUT A LIMITED TIGHTENING
UP ON WHAT THE GROC CONSIDERS TO BE EXCESSES IN WORDS OR ACTIONS
CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS POLICIES.

15. VARIOUS FACTORS WILL ARGUE AGAINST TAKING EXTREME ACTIONS.
INTERNATIONALLY, THE GROC APPEARS TO BE ENGAGED IN A CONCERTED
EFFORT TO PROMOTE ITS IMAGE AS A PROSPEROUS, PROGRESSIVE AND
FREE SOCIETY ABROAD, ESPECIALLY IN THE U.S., AS EVIDENCED BY
THE PREMIER'S INCREASING WILLINGNESS TO GIVE INTERVIEWS TO
FOREIGN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES AND CONTINUED EFFORTS TO
ENCOURAGE SENATORS, CONGRESSMEN, AND THEIR AIDES TO VISIT
TAIWAN. FOR THIS REASON THE GROC MAY WELL BE RELUCTANT TO
ADOPT MEASURES THAT COULD SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THESE EFFORTS.
DOMESTICALLY, A BROADENED, ALBEIT STILL NARROW, POLITICAL
AWARENESS AMONG THE POPULACE AND A BODY OF MORE EXPERIENCED
INDEPENDENTS PLACED MORE WIDELY THROUGHOUT THE SOCIETY THAN
IN THE PAST ARGUE FOR CAUTION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A
TOUGHER DOMESTIC LINE IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE ALIENATING
PORTIONS OF SOCIETY, INCLUDING TAIWANESE AND YOUTH, WHOSE
SUPPORT THE PREMIER HAS BEEN CULTIVATING.
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